



Eastern Idaho firefighters attack a simulated oil storage tank fire at the INL Fire Training Area during a recent cooperative training session with the Eastern Idaho Fire Academy.

INL trains regional firefighters in conjunction with Eastern Idaho Fire Academy

By [John Howze](#), INL Communications & Governmental Affairs

A team of certified Idaho National Laboratory firefighting instructors recently helped firefighters from around the region improve their ability to deal with fuel and automobile fires, and to locate and extricate people trapped in burning buildings or wrecked vehicles.

INL hosted the training in conjunction with the Eastern Idaho Fire Academy. This annual event is sponsored by the Eastern Idaho Fire Chiefs' Association, the Division of Professional Technical Education Emergency Services Training, and the Idaho State System of Technical Colleges.

Firefighters from within a 100-plus-mile radius (Rexburg, Ucon, Blackfoot and as far away as the North Custer County Volunteer Fire Department) spent a full day dealing with realistic scenarios that included live fires, smoke-filled buildings and wrecked vehicles that needed to be cut apart to reach trapped "victims."

"We have one of the best fire training facilities in the Northwest," said INL Fire Chief Eric Gossweiler. "As part of our outreach to regional communities, we were pleased to offer a rigorous set of training scenarios, all conducted by our certified trainers under the watchful eyes of safety professionals."



The Eastern Idaho Fire Chiefs' Association, the Division of Professional Technical Education Emergency Services Training and the Idaho technical college system sponsor the annual academy.

The firefighters split into two teams. While one team attacked an oil storage tank fire simulated by liquefied-petroleum-gas--fired equipment at the INL Fire Training Facility, the second team worked to locate and remove an unconscious "victim" from a smoke-filled room with zero visibility. Then they switched places.

That was just the morning workout. In the afternoon, one team stabilized wrecked vehicles, and then cut them apart to free more "victims," using the Jaws of Life and other advanced tools. Meanwhile, the second team practiced forcible entry using power equipment and specialized tools. Then, again, they swapped places.



Regional firefighters remove a roof they cut from a vehicle as part of a training exercise.

"At Ucon, we don't get a whole lot of calls," Ucon firefighter Trent Jeppson said. "Here at INL, we worked on search and rescue, search and recovery, and we used INL apparatus to simulate fuel storage fires and vehicle fires. I learned how to work together with other regional fire departments, and use different communication styles. It was great training. I can't wait to do it again."

INL has mutual aid agreements with fire departments throughout the eastern Idaho region. Such an agreement proved crucial in December when a fuel storage tank fire occurred at Ike's Tesoro Station in Mud Lake. INL immediately responded to the call for help and INL firefighters were a crucial part of the eight-agency team that put out the fire in which 50,000 gallons of diesel fuel and unleaded gasoline burned.

Blackfoot firefighter Robb Dansie appreciated the hands-on aspect of the training provided.

"We had safety training before each scenario," he said. "Then we were able to get out there and get it done. I learned about apparatus positioning. Where we set up our firefighting equipment made a difference in being able to successfully attack each fire. It was good to learn this stuff."

"We packed in a lot of training in one day," said Mark L. Johnson, INL Fire Department Training Division manager. "It included hands-on training with live fire, plus search and rescue. This is particularly important for some of the region's fire departments which may not get many calls. If you don't have a lot of actual responses, training is the best substitute in order to learn what you need to know. These firefighters are better prepared now to protect lives, property and the environment."

